

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
 PRESS CONFERENCE
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MINISTER ZHULALI: On the 21st of July in Albania, made a visit Defense Secretary of the United States of America William Perry. That was a historic visit, not only for the Albanian military but for Albania. The United States of America are the most important friend of Albania and cooperation on defense and security matters with the United States is of a great interest for us.

Mr. Perry had negotiations in the Ministry of Defense and we had a couple of meetings with Prime Minister Mr. Alexander Meksi and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We also had a very important meeting with the President of the Republic Mr. Berisha. In the meetings in the Ministry of Defense, we talked about issues of bilateral cooperation as well as in the context of the participation of Albania in the Partnership for Peace. We extended the basis of the cooperation between our militaries. A special part in our negotiations took situation in the region -- in Balkans - the risk of the conflict of Bosnia.

We exchanged ideas to come to a conclusion in order to do our best to avoid a conflict being spilling over. Special care was paid -- attention -- toward the situation in Kosovo and we exchanged ideas about this issue, too. Albania were valued as a serious partner in the Partnership for Peace initiative. We expressed our idea for a fast and immediate admission of Albania in this alliance. Mr. Perry values Albania as an important -- as a key factor for peace and stability in the region -- in Balkans.

At the same time the American part along with support for education and training of our Albanian military personnel provided for Albanian assistance which doesn't include lethal equipment which is going to be extended in the future. The visit of Mr. Perry in Albania has been extraordinary. He was welcomed with a great warmth and great satisfaction from the Albanian military personnel. We really appreciate very much this special attention of his towards Albania. I personally thank very much Mr. Perry for his contribution to extend the relationships as well as for the personal contributes he's doing to have a solution of the problems in this region.

SECRETARY PERRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Zhulali. I want to start off by saying how pleased I am to be in Albania and how grateful I am for the very warm welcome I and my delegation have received. My stop here is part of a trip in which I will be visiting seven countries in the region. This is at a time when there is a dangerous situation in Bosnia and the United States is working along with other nations to try to effect a peace plan for this area.

We are not only concerned with achieving peace in Bosnia, but are committed to see that this war will not spill over or spread out to other countries in the region. In that

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regard, I met with President Berisha to get his assessment of the security situation in Bosnia. I will pass his assessment and his advice on to President Clinton.

I also met with the prime minister and the foreign minister discussing a host of regional security issues. And, of course, met with Defense Minister Zhulali. This was a follow-on to the meeting we had in Washington last month. We discussed a variety of defense cooperation programs, both bilateral and through the Partnership for Peace.

Yesterday, we talked about cooperation; today I saw it in action. Minister Zhulali took me on an inspection of the Albanian ranger regiment. This was truly a highlight of my entire European visit. This is defense cooperation at its best. There I saw what one man can do to extend his ability and training for hundreds of others. The commanding officer of the regiment, Major Hema (SP), was trained at our ranger school last year. He is now returned to institute a training program for the Albanian ranger regiment, a very impressive program.

Besides seeing very impressive demonstrations of their training in action, we discussed the formation of joint exercises between American rangers and Albanian rangers. In the United States, the rangers have a motto which is, "Rangers lead the way." It is clear that this is also true of Albanian rangers. They are leading the way for our defense cooperation program, showing how it can operate at its very best.

The Minister and I are prepared to take a few questions.

Q. Mr. Secretary, your visit has to do with challenges that the Bosnian Congress are facing. What is the US government approach toward the situation in the Balkans and what do you think of the solutions?

SECRETARY PERRY: There are a host of regional security problems in the Balkans. But the dominant problem today, of course, is the on-going war in Bosnia. We have two major objectives relative to the war in Bosnia. The first is to stop the spread of that war. The second is to provide humanitarian assistance that will both minimize the violence going on there and reduce the effects of the violence.

Both of those objectives could be best achieved by achieving peace in Bosnia and that is what we're working for primarily. We're working on that peace through the so-called "contact group," which has proposed a peace plan to both the Bosnian government and the Bosnian Serbs. That contact group is now considering the replies of the Bosnian government and Bosnian Serbs to the peace plan.

We have a substantial commitment of power in the region, but it is devoted to humanitarian ends. It does that through airlifts and airdrops of humanitarian supplies and by enforcing prohibitions on the bombardment of cities.

Q. Mr. Secretary, the Bosnian Serbs have not accepted the division of Bosnia in a plan approved by the high level contact groups of nations. This was considered by the contact

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group to be a fair plan. If that plan is now changed, what does that say about the credibility of Washington and powerful nations in this area of the world?

SECRETARY PERRY: Ambassador Redman has reported from Geneva that he is disappointed with the Serbian response. It will now be up to the contact group's foreign ministers to decide what appropriate action to take. This group of ministers will meet at the end of the month, sometime before the month is over, to consider what appropriate actions will be. Until we learn what action they're going to take, it would be premature to try to answer the question.

Q. Are you also disappointed, and do you think this increases the prospect of spread of the conflict?

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes, I am disappointed. Whether this increases the probability of a spread of the conflict, will be determined by the particular action taken by the foreign ministers in the next week or so. They will be considering a whole series of potential actions that will include the possibility of a tightening of sanctions on Serbia. As a last resort they would consider the lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia. Certainly when they make these considerations, they will have foremost in mind the danger of this war spreading.

Q. What is your opinion about the reforms in the Albanian military forces and what is this level to compare with the modern militaries today?

SECRETARY PERRY: That's a complicated question. Let me break it into several parts. First of all, there is the reform associated with the civilian control of military in a democratic society. In that reform, Albania is the most advanced of all of the nations in Central and Eastern Europe.

Then there's reform in training and doctrine. In that respect, Albania has made very great progress in just two years. That was demonstrated to me on my visit to the ranger regiment this morning. It is obviously -- they will have much farther to go in that regard, but they're off to a very good beginning.

There's also the issue of reform in force structure. Minister Zhulali and I had several discussions on that and are developing a plan by which the United States can be of assistance to the minister in the force structure reform.

Q. In the context of the need to defend (inaudible), can we hold on concrete assistance from the United States in order to modernize and improve the old equipment of the Albanian militaries?

SECRETARY PERRY: We don't have any concrete programs at this time for assisting in the modernization of lethal weapons. Our assistance in materiel at this stage is limited to support equipment. This is true not only of Albania but is true of our support of all of the nations in Central and Eastern Europe. Among all of those nations, Albania stands among

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the highest priority for receiving this support. This is because of the rapid -- the dedication to reform, and the rapid pace in which they are achieving it.

Thank you very much.

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Once Reclusive Albania Warmly Welcomes U.S. Defense Chief

By John F. Harris

Washington Post Staff Writer

TIRANA, Albania, July 21—Defense Secretary William J. Perry said he was honored to be here, but the young Albanian soldier insisted the pleasure was all his.

"We are 10 times happier to have the secretary of defense in our country," the soldier said, "and it is an event that will live in our memories for years to come."

Albania has gone from a policy of official hatred of the United States to one of almost fawning admiration, at least among the military officials who were the focus of Perry's 24-hour visit, which ended today. The reception Perry received here was the most effusive he has won so far during his week-long odyssey through the Balkans.

Albania is considered crucial to stability in the wider Balkans region because so many people of Albanian origin live in the neighboring Kosovo region of Serbia. Relations between Serbians and the Albanians of Kosovo are tense, and if war broke out, U.S. officials say it could drag in several neighboring states.

Even more than at his other stops, which included the former hard-line communist states of Romania and Bulgaria, Perry in Albania witnessed a land in stark transition.

For four decades before his death in 1985, dictator Enver Hoxha's paranoid visions of imminent foreign invasion led him to build 700,000 concrete bunkers across the countryside and to seal its population, now 3.2 million, off from the world. Not until 1992, long after most other commu-

nist states began their reforms, did the doors swing open on the Albanian dungeon-state.

Perry and his party saw a kaleidoscope of conflicting images. The new parliament is an impressive cathedral of marble and glass. But the Defense Ministry is a musty, creaky building with peeling paint and toilets where visitors must pour down buckets of water to make them flush.

Albania is the only country in Europe to be classified by the United Nations as a "least developed nation," and it looks the part: crumbling apartment buildings, cows and chickens roaming the streets, sporadic water and power outages, a barely functioning telephone network.

Perry's wife, Lee, visited a hospital and reported that, while the staff was earnest and well trained, flies were

buzzing around everywhere.

On the other hand, Albanians are rejoicing in their liberation from dictatorship and their introduction to small-scale capitalism. The sidewalks are lined with kiosks selling consumer goods. A few years ago, private cars were illegal; now there are 150,000 of them.

The Albanian military is as eager as Bega's customers to embrace the United States. "They are eager for any kind of association with Western security associations," said a senior U.S. official traveling with Perry.

The Albanians sought to join NATO but, like other former communist East European states, were told no and were granted membership in an auxiliary organization called the Partnership for Peace.